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set against a background of deep vermillion—the statue (a fine tribute to Saint Gaudens, by the way) is set off by a contrast of green bronze against iridescent purple and lavender silk—while the palette is rich with blues and greens. * * * There are other canvases already finished—notably “The Spirit of Religious Toleration” and “The Spirit of Charity,” to say nothing of a smaller group of panels.

All of these go to fill the spacious ceiling. For the side walls Mr. Ballin has in preparation an even more ambitious set which will illustrate the history and progress of the State. He has chosen for this purpose such subjects as will combine fact and the wild poetry of imagination. For instance, there is a half-finished “Nicolet Meeting the Wisconsin (Winnebago) Indians” (Nicolet

who thought he would strike Japan by going West, and, hoping to win the natives, dressed in a grotesque headgear and a Mandarin jacket!)—a painting grotesque in idea but lyric in its interpretation. Then there is the stoical “Red Bird giving himself up to Major Whistler” which marks the beginning of the end of internecine strife in 1827. * * * Altogether this room will be one of the most striking things in America; it will take rank with the very finest imaginative thought we have produced, and in sheer force of color will surpass them all. It will answer, in the highest sense, the peculiar demands of decoration—a thing which some of our most inspired sets of paintings do not begin to fulfil. These paintings are both a justification and a prophecy of Mr. Ballin as a decorator!

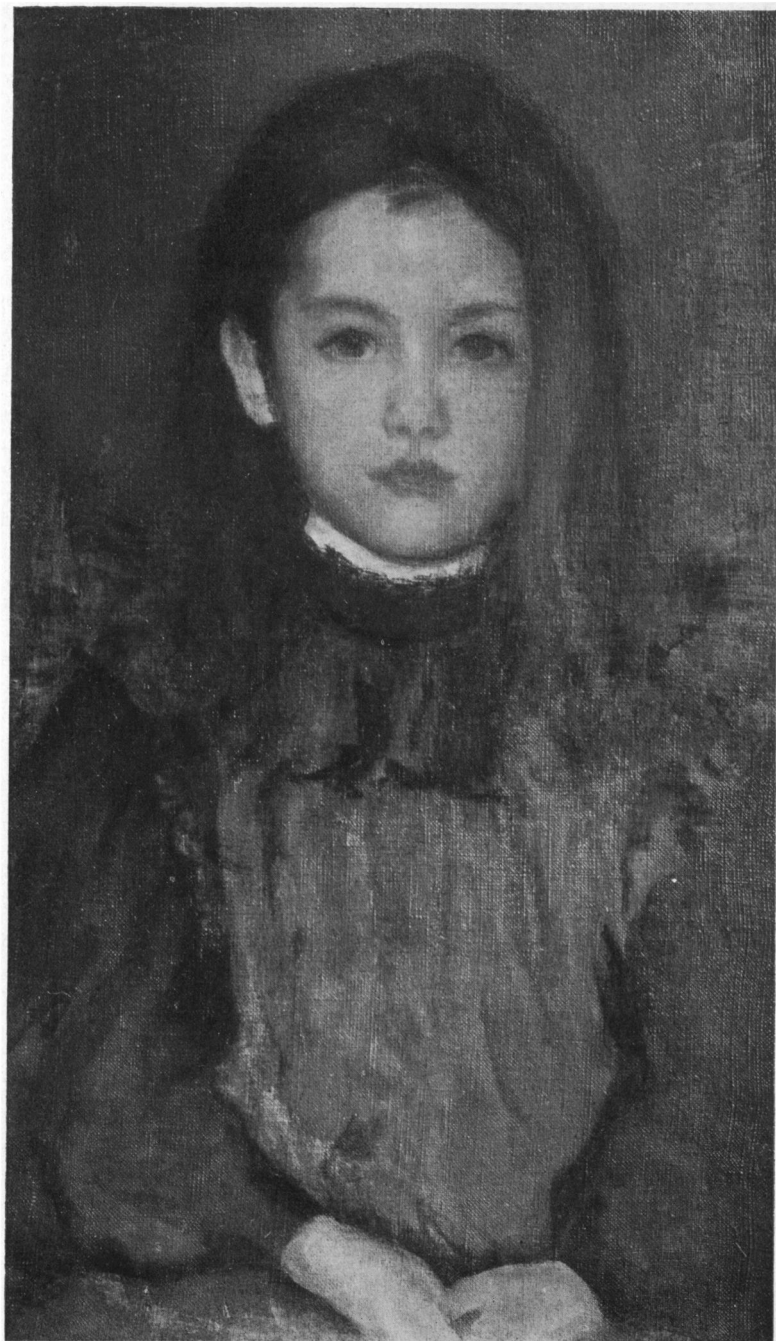
WHAT IS IMPRESSIONISM?

BY DUNCAN C. PHILLIPS, JR.

WHAT does Impressionism in painting really mean? After some forty years of agitated discussion, there exists in the public mind a confusion amounting to bewilderment in regard to the proper answer to that question. The reason is not far to seek. Critics have been provocative and entertaining, according to their fashion, with a truly journalistic contempt for any short cuts to the truth. They have played with their subject as a cat will play with a mouse to prolong the pleasurable excitement. George Moore, for instance, pounced upon the truth when he said that “Impressionism penetrates all true painting” and only “in its most modern sense signifies the rapid noting of elusive appearance.” Yet he allowed the thought to escape that he might play with it upon another occasion. What is the result? Ask the average well-informed man you meet what Impressionism in painting really means, and he will reply somewhat as follows—“Oh—it’s a new-fan-

gled French way of painting everything light and airy, and of spilling all the colors of the rainbow—helter-skelter—into the same picture.”

While resenting the flippancy of the gentleman’s manner, the most enthusiastic critics of the new spectral vision could hardly quarrel with the truth of this statement. When urged to a definition of the same subject, Camille Maclair proceeds to industriously describe the technique of color spots invented by Claude Monet in his attempt to render the shimmer of aerial vibration. Now this method is a typical achievement of the modern mind. Suffice it here to say that, successful as it has been in producing upon canvas subtle verities of light and air, it is at best a brave but crude beginning and only an experiment in the evolution of realistic painting. So engrossed is the painter with his melted outlines, his divided tones, his colored shadows, that his picture too closely resembles a scientific demonstration. “Col-



LITTLE ROSE

JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

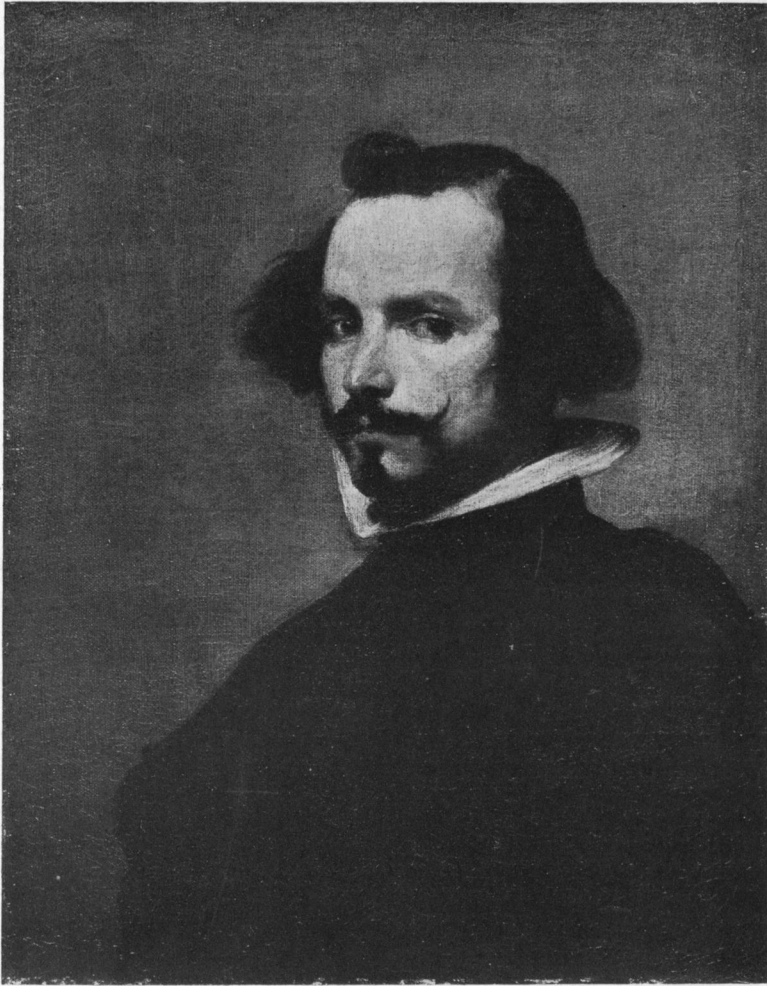
ored stenography," Hunecker called it. It seems hardly credible that learned critics can present any one technique as the embodiment of Impressionism, and to the average mind the word seems altogether too big for mere technical adventure, however important. Yet by the common consent of painters, critics and public, Monet, Degas and the rest of that group are *the* Impressionists. The perplexing question is, wherein lies their right to a monopoly of the title? Opinions, moreover, seem to be divided whether these artists are Impressionists because of their methods or because of their motives. Most writers agree with M. Mauguier that the innovations of palette and brush have earned them the distinction, for these, at least, are indisputably new. Inconveniently, however, the methods of the several painters, invariably grouped together, are widely dissimilar. Some laid their paint on in gobs, others in shrill, thin washes. If *Pointillisme* be Impressionism, how can Degas and the earlier Manet claim kinship with Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro? If, on the other hand, this little band of men are Impressionists because they have been drawn together to express, each in his own way, transient aspects of contemporaneous reality, how can we forget that the expression of contemporaneous reality has been the unchanging purpose of true realists from the very earliest day? As for the "transient aspects," the new regard for effects of life and light in passing, these things constitute one of the valuable contributions of modern art. But the realistic principle dates back to Giotto. Can it be that learned critics, in cramming Impressionism into a new, small, pigeon hole, have only thickened the fog of misunderstanding that envelopes the name?

It is the general belief, a belief difficult to wholly eradicate, that Impressionism is peculiarly modern, and that, being modern, it consists very naturally of egotistical specializations, and adventurous experiments in technique. Now, in the first place we forget that other times besides our own have possessed enquiring minds. It is inherent in the nature

of man to be curious and experimental. He begins in the cradle by investigating the mystery of his toes, and he ends by dabbling with Nature's elemental forces, also with philosophy and machinery and art. Da Vinci wrote learnedly about perspective and colored shadows, and for him, as Pater observed, "the novel impression he conveyed, the exquisite effect he created counted as an end in itself—a perfect end." What could be more "modern" in subtlety of suggestion than the Mona Lisa, with her watchful eyes, her slow, disquieting smile and that fantastic background of blue-green rocks and interminable rivulets? As for Rembrandt's soul-searching shaft of golden light, that is but another early instance of the craftsman spirit delighting in the production of "effects," a spirit destined in our time to become so dominant and so contagious a force. But in the second place, the true Impressionism is not solely concerned with technique, nor is it the gospel of either "art for art's sake" or "truth for truth's sake." In the last analysis it is the soul of the painter that counts. Here imitation, be it ever so perfect, will result in a statement of fact such as we may find in any book of reference.

The personal and spontaneous impression, therefore, is requisite in realism no less than in romance. A painting may be a perfect marvel of realistic imitation—yet unworthy to be called art, because lacking the artist's testimony of impression.

In the Walters Collection at Baltimore we may see side by side two small but characteristic canvases by Alma Tadema and Jean Francis Millet. The former is entitled "The Triumph of Titus." It is a triumph of technique. The cold and lustrous sheen of the marble stairs and the variegated textures of apparel and ornament are copied in detail with unerring exactness. The imitation is astoundingly perfect. The adjacent Millet represents a flock of sheep, huddled by night, in their fold. They make but a shimmering blur under the misty moon. Nothing is described, nothing defined. And yet, somehow, we can see the rest-



VELASQUEZ

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less stirring of the sheep, we can feel the chill of the air, and we are deeply impressed by the poetic illusion. Now both these pictures are realistic, each in its own way. The way of Tadema was an elaborate and painstaking prose, whereas Millet's picture is endowed with the directness and simplicity of poetic inspiration. Tadema arrived at his knowledge of Titus and his time through toilsome years of study; Millet saw his vision of the sheep-fold one night and transcribed his impression before his brain was cool. Tadema employed the facts he found in books, Millet the secrets he learned from Nature. Tadema,

the scholar, has painted with fastidious precision colorful chapters of ancient history; Millet, the poet-painter, transcribed with spontaneous and sublime carelessness the peasants from whose midst he came, their fields and flocks, their labor and their love. Both men may be counted realists, but Millet was also an Impressionist.

It is my firm belief that Impressionism is not a transient technique, but an ancient and abiding faith, not merely the sensational production of some revolutionary modern painters, but one of the basic principles—I might say the one true philosophy, of all painting. As



WINTER LANDSCAPE

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

KANO SANSETSU

many as are the eyes that see, the hearts that feel, the brains that formulate their conception of visible or intangible things, so many are life's real Impressionists. The value of their impressions varies according to their understanding. Even among those whose talents seek expression in the arts, there are all kinds of Impressionists, from the men of lofty genius on the mountain peaks of inspiration, the Michelangelos, and the Rembrandts, to the horde of petty craftsmen who labor in sterile moorlands with an unavailing and uncouth endeavor. Midway upon the scale are the radical, experimental Frenchmen we have been discussing, artists who are so enamored of the appearances of objects under diffused or conflicting lights, so absorbed in the striving to render visual sensation, that nobility of theme seldom concerns them. They are Impressionists to be sure, but they represent merely the most recent stage in a gradual and logical development.

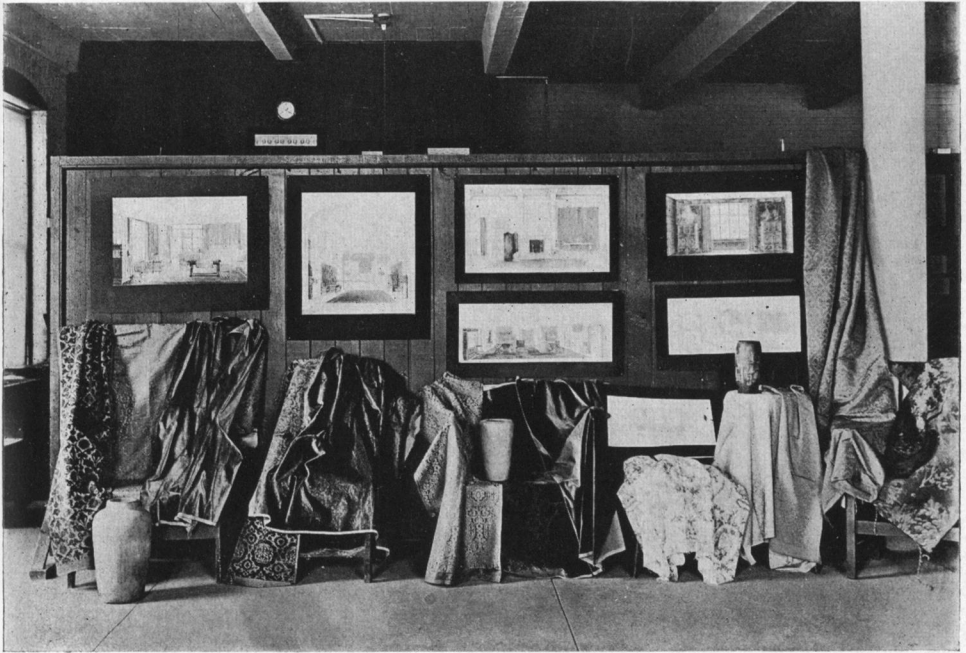
That astute critic, R. A. M. Stevenson, was, I think, the first to point out that Impressionism in the sense which is commonly accepted to-day received its original impulse from the supreme Velasquez. To him is attributed the practical demonstration of that vital principle which ordains that objects should not be painted as they are known to exist, but as they appear to the momentary and more or less abstracted gaze, under ever

changing conditions of light and air. As a definition of the Impressionism of nineteenth century realists, we shall see how this utters indeed the last word. However, if the critic had regarded Impressionism as an eternal principle rather than as a modern practice, he would have taken for his model not merely the brilliant advances which Velasquez made upon the knowledge of his time, but the complete genius of the man, inclusive of those instincts for decoration and self-expression which he inherited from his predecessors. His Shakespearean immensity lay in his perfect mastery of the dual nature of his art, the decorative and the representative, both interpenetrated by his own taste for color and line on the one hand, and his own vision of his model on the other.

Let us, then, formulate new conclusions, at the sacrifice, perhaps, of favorite theories. In the first place, Impressionism can not be said to represent any one technique nor any one way of viewing nature, but, rather, all artistic achievements, whatever the method, in which sincere, spontaneous and forthright impressions are convincingly expressed through the art conceived by the brain, and the craft designed by the hand. In the second place, Impressionism is by no means solely concerned with the naturalistic portrayal of "transient aspects of contemporaneous reality." It is quite as high an art and a much more

difficult one to give form and substance to one's fleeting impression of intangible beauty; to sound with Whistler a chord of color; to incarnate with Watts a powerful thought; or to perpetuate with the painters of old Japan a vanishing dream. Romance yields her impressions no less than realism. Thirdly, Impressionism is not new and strange, but marvelously old. Stevenson said that to visit Velasquez at the Prado was to shatter one's faith in the modernity of modern painting. He might less cautiously and quite as accurately have stated that several centuries before this great Spaniard lived, far back in those dim ages of esthetic dynasties at the other end of the

world, there existed in China and Japan an art of landscape painting which contained the essence of Impressionism; that is an art in which the means of expression were harmoniously adapted to the artist's original emotion. For, after all, Impressionism is synonymous in equal measure with art itself, which is purely technical, and the artistic impulse which is, or should be, inspirational. In its only logical sense it means the giving of definite color and form to single, personal impressions. In this sense, then, have not all truly great painters been more or less Impressionists and should not the significance of the term be widened rather than restricted?



THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF FINE AND APPLIED ART: STUDIES IN INTERIOR DECORATION

ART STUDENT LIFE IN NEW YORK

BY MAY DENTON

THE old belief that it was necessary to seek Paris or Rome in order to acquire rudimentary knowledge of drawing and painting is rapidly being dis-

proved. New York and other American cities now can boast as excellent schools and as good instructors as any city abroad—and the study in this country is